

DISTRIBUTION AND SPECIATION PROBLEMS
WITH POCKET GOPHERS (*Thomomys* spp.)
IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON. Gary
Witmer, USDA Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service, Olympia, WA.

Pocket gophers are a distinct, specialized, subterranean mammal occupying much of western North America. In many areas, populations are controlled because of damage caused by feeding and burrowing activities. About 5 species and 20 subspecies are recognized in Oregon and Washington. Many small, disjunct populations are considered subspecies and some of these are being considered for federal protection by the USFWS. Distributions of these subspecies is poorly known with reliance on old records. Considerable intergrading occurs. Speciation has been in a state of flux partly due to the variation in morphological characters and poor understanding of the genetics and breeding relationships between species and subspecies. An effort is needed to delineate the range of species and subspecies and to provide criteria for reliable identification of live specimens in the field.